

JURY DUTY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What Should I Do If I Receive a Jury Summons in the Mail?

READ THE SUMMONS!!! The summons contains a great deal of information about where, when and how to report for jury service.

Must I Respond to the Jury Summons?

Yes. The jury summons is an official court order; failure to obey such an order could result in a finding of contempt; you could be arrested, fined or placed in jail. Your juror summons contains a juror "PIN" number. Logon to the jury webpage (juror.alacourt.gov) to respond to the summons.

Even if you plan to request your jury duty to be excused or postponed, you must logon to the webpage to begin this process.

If you still have questions after you respond on the web page, you may email your question to: trish.campbell@alacourt.gov or call 334.737.3432.

How Was I Selected?

Your name was randomly selected by computer from a list of Lee County citizens who have either a driver's license or state ID card. The notices are mailed from Montgomery and the Court Administrator receives a list from the Administrative Office of Courts in Montgomery. No local official, judge, circuit clerk or court administrator has any role in the jury section process. No local official, judge, circuit clerk or court administrator has the ability to alter the master jury list in any fashion or form. All jury data resides in Montgomery and is managed by the Administrative Office of Courts.

Where do I report?

The Lee County Judicial Center is located at 2311 Gateway Dr. Opelika, AL 36801. Court security at the front door will direct you to the jury check-in line. No smoking/vaping is allowed on campus; none of these items (including lighter) are permitted in the Justice Center. Weapons of any kind are not allowed in the Justice Center, including pocket knives. Leave these items in your car or they will be confiscated by Court Security. Allow extra time for parking and going through the metal detector.

What Happens If I Fail to Appear?

Per Section 12-16-82 Code of Alabama: "If any person summoned as a grand or petit juror shall fail to obey such summons without good excuse, to be determined by the court, he or she shall be deemed guilty of a contempt of court; and, if no sufficient excuse is rendered for him or her at the time of his or her default, an order shall be entered for him or her to show cause why he or she shall not be adjudged guilty of contempt and punished accordingly; and, if he shall fail at the next session after the service of such notice to render such excuse, he or she shall be fined by the court not more than three hundred dollars (\$300) and may be imprisoned in the county jail for not more than 10 days. In courts holding sessions longer than 30 days, the order shall be made returnable 20 days after it issues, and the person in default shall have 10 days after service in which to appear and render his excuse."

What If I Have Moved Out of Lee County?

Go online and complete the Jury Verification process on our webpage (juror.alacourt.gov). You will be asked if you have been a citizen of the Lee County for the past twelve months. If this is not true for you, leave that question blank. You must then forward documentation of your current residency via fax (334.737.3435) or email Denisa.Bell@alacourt.gov. Acceptable documentation includes: copy of new driver's license with new address; copy of a utility bill with your name and new address, pay stub with new address or or a copy of a lease or mortgage. (Please Note: Until your name is taken off the Lee County driver's license list at the Department of Public Safety your name is subject to be selected again in the future.)

My Address Is Incorrect on the Summons. How Do I Submit a Change of Address?

You will need to logon to juror.alacourt.gov to respond to your summons. You will enter your correct address on the webpage.

How Often Am I Required to Serve?

There is no limit to the number of times that you may serve in a lifetime. However, you are only obligated to serve jury duty once every three years. Jurors that have served in the prior three years may be excused, upon request.

I Received a Summons for Jury Service but I Just Served Less Than Three Years Ago. May I Be Excused?

You will need to logon to juror.alacourt.gov to respond to your summons. Then email trish.campbell@alacourt.gov to request an excuse based on jury service within the last three years.

Isn't There an Age Limit for Jury Service?

As long as you are 19 years of age or older, we will not excuse you from jury service because of your age. Excusing a person based on age would be a form of discrimination.

May I Postpone My Jury Service to a More Convenient Date?

Yes. Logon to the jury webpage (juror.alacourt.gov) to respond to your summons. After you complete this process, email trish.campbell@alacourt.gov to request a postponement. Include the reason for the request in your email. Generally, jurors are granted postponement. If you have been previously postponed, the Court may have to approve a further delay in your service

I'm Physically Unable to Serve as a Juror. How Can I be Excused From Jury Duty?

Logon to the jury webpage (juror.alacourt.gov) to respond to your summons. After you complete this process, email trish.campbell@alacourt.gov to notify the court you are seeking a medical excuse from jury duty. Contact your doctor/medical care provider and request a medical excuse stating you are not physically and/or mentally able to serve as a juror. Medical excuses must be signed by a doctor/health care provider and received within five (5) business days of receipt of your summons. All correspondence must contain the juror's full name and reason for request. Medical excuses may be forwarded by mail (Patricia Campbell, Court Administrator, 2311 Gateway Drive, Suite 201, Opelika AL 36801), fax (334.737.3435) or email (trish.campbell@alacourt.gov). Should you receive another summons in the future and you are still having medical problems, you must provide another doctor's excuse and forward it to the court. Alabama law does not permit permanent excusal from jury duty nor removal from the master jury list for any reason other than death or conviction of a crime of moral turpitude.

My Doctor Submitted a Medical Excuse for Me When I Was Summoned Previously. Why Do I Have to Submit Another One This Year?

Each medical excuse applies only to the specific jury summons for which it has been submitted. If you are summoned again at a later date, you must submit another medical excuse. All medical excuses must be signed by a physician/health care provider. Excuses may be faxed to 334.737.3435 or emailed to trish.campbell@alacourt.gov.

How Can Someone be Excused from jury duty?

By law (§ 12-16-62), the State of Alabama has no exemptions from jury service. No qualified prospective juror is exempt from jury service. [Acts 1978, No. 594, p. 712 § 8.] However, if jury duty for your summons dates presents an undue hardship or extreme inconvenience contact Trisha Campbell via phone (334) 737-3432 or email at trish.campbell@alacourt.gov to request a postponement to a later date. Your request must be received within five (5) business days of receipt of your summons. All correspondence must contain the juror's full name, date scheduled to appear for jury duty and reason for request. Request for excuses may be mailed (Patricia Campbell, Court Administrator, 2311 Gateway Drive, Suite 201, Opelika AL 36801), faxed (334.737.3435) or emailed (trish.campbell@alacourt.gov).

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My Occupation Makes It Difficult to Serve. May I Be Excused from Jury Duty?

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I Am a Business Owner and My Business Shuts Down If I'm Not There. May I Be Excused?

No. You may postpone to a more convenient time to help you plan ahead or make arrangements but the law does not provide an exemption for business owners from jury service. When you report for jury duty, you will have an opportunity to speak with the judge and state your hardship.

I Am a Student. May I Be Excused from Jury Duty?

No. Full or part-time student status does not qualify as an excuse from service. You may postpone your jury service to a time when you have a break in your school schedule.

My Request for Excuse Was Denied. What Should I Do Now?

You will need to report for jury duty as instructed on your summons. You will have an opportunity to speak with the judge in court about the denial.

Is my Employer Required to Pay Me While I Serve on Jury Duty?

Your employer is required by law (*Per Section 12-16-8(c) Code of Alabama) to pay you your normal salary if you are a full-time employee or work a full-time schedule on a regular basis. Employers are not required to pay part-time employees their normal salary by law. (Please Note: Your employer is only required to pay you a 40-hour work week's pay, no overtime pay even if you normally work overtime.) Employers are prohibited by law § 12-16-8.1) from firing an employee for serving as a juror.

Section 12-16-8(c) Code of Alabama: "Notwithstanding the excused absence provided in subsection (a), any full-time employee shall be entitled to his or her usual compensation received from such employment."

Prospective jurors who are not paid by their employer or are self-employed will NOT be excused. You may however request a postponement to a later time.

Will I Be Paid for Jury Service?

The State of Alabama does not pay citizens to serve on jury duty. However, the State does provide an expense allowance to citizens serving as jurors. The amount a court may pay jurors is set by the State Legislature. Currently, the rate of compensation is \$10.00 per day and five cents per mile. Mileage is automatically calculated from the juror's zip code to the court.

Can My Employer Deduct My Juror Pay from My Pay Check?

No. The attorney general has ruled in Opinion 90-00190 that juror pay received while serving is an expense allowance and should not be deducted from your normal salary.

If I Work 2nd or 3rd Shift, Do I Still Have to Go to Work?

No. The attorney general has ruled in [Opinion 95-00007](#) and [Opinion 97-0138](#) that any second or third shift employee is placed on first shift status by law for their week of jury

duty service. Your employer cannot make you work and is required to pay you first shift wages if you are full-time. (This includes the evening after jury service is concluded.)

If I Am Summoned to Court as A Juror, But I Was Not Chosen to Serve on a Jury, Am I Still Entitled to An Expense Allowance and Mileage?

Yes. As a summoned juror, you are entitled to an expense and mileage allowance regardless of whether you served on a jury that day. However, you are not authorized to receive an expense and mileage allowance if you are notified in advance that your services are not needed for that day or if you report only to be excused.

If I Work Outside the State of Alabama and I am Summoned as a Juror in Lee County, Am I Entitled to My Usual Compensation from My Employer?

Not necessarily. Alabama law does not govern employers of other states. If you wish to inquire as to whether you can be compensated for Alabama jury service, you must consult the law of the state in which you are employed.

Note: The Attorney General in Georgia has concluded that it is unlawful for an employer in Georgia to fire an employee working in Georgia because the employee was absent from his/her employment for serving as a juror in Alabama. For example, if a person is summoned for jury duty in Alabama, the person's employer in Georgia cannot fire the person for being absent for serving as a juror. To do so would subject the employer to civil liability.

Is There Any Special Way I Must Act in Court?

You should conduct yourself as you would at any serious and important event. You should be courteous at all times. It is important that you remain alert when the court is in session.

Why Do They Ask so Many Personal Questions and Am I Required to Answer Them?

Everyone who is summoned into court as a juror comes with past experiences and opinions which may affect the way a person views evidence or the testimony of some witnesses. The process of questioning prospective jurors is called "voir dire" and is controlled by the judge. The questioning is designed to help the parties, the judge and the juror learn of experiences, relationships or opinions which might cause the juror to base a decision on something other than the law and evidence presented at trial. For example, a juror who had recently lost a loved one in an alcohol related traffic accident may not feel emotionally detached enough to render a fair and impartial verdict in a case where the defendant is

charged with driving a motor vehicle while under the influence of an alcoholic beverage. Prospective jurors take an oath to answer all questions truthfully; however, most judges will provide individuals an opportunity to answer questions privately when the juror indicates that he or she would be embarrassed or would feel uncomfortable providing a full, complete and truthful answer in the public forum of open court.

Why Are There Such Long Breaks and Lunch Hours During Trial?

The entire court team works vigorously to maximize the use of your time but there will be periods of waiting that cannot be avoided. On occasion, there will be times you will be required to wait while the Judge takes up an issue which must be heard outside of the jury's presence. We try to keep these to a minimum; however, these are often circumstances beyond the Court's control. We recommend that you bring reading materials, crossword puzzles, etc. to occupy you while you wait. You must take your personal belongings with you during lunch/breaks, as jury spaces will be cleaned during these breaks.

May I Take Notes During the Trial?

Yes. You will be provided with a pad and pen and the judge will give you special instructions about note-taking. You should not become so involved in taking notes that you miss the nature of witness testimony or important points of the testimony. Notes must stay in the courtroom or jury room during the trial, but you will have them available to you during deliberations. Upon returning the verdict, the juror will destroy their own notes.

May Jurors Ask Questions During the Trial or Deliberations?

Jurors cannot ask questions during the trial. However, if the jury has a question during deliberation, the jury foreman should write it on a piece of paper and ask the bailiff to hand it to the judge. The judge will respond appropriately by writing a note back or answering directly from the bench, or the judge may indicate that it is not proper to answer the question at that time.

May I Talk to Anyone About What Is Happening in Court?

Jurors are judges of the facts and should conduct themselves like a judge would conduct himself or herself. You must base your decision **ONLY** on the information that you receive in the courtroom and not from any other source. This means that you may not discuss the case with anyone, even a fellow juror, until it is completed and has been submitted to you for jury deliberation. Jurors must be able to keep an open mind on all the issues in a case until they have heard all of the evidence and the instructions of the judge; and thus, should not form or express any opinions on the case until the end. When the case is over you may discuss it with anyone you'd like, or you may keep silent if you prefer.

What if an Unexpected Emergency Keeps Me from Coming to the Justice Center?

It is very important that all jurors report each day and that they be on time. Your absence may delay a trial and result in hardship on the participants or cause unnecessary costs to be borne by the litigants. If you have an emergency (sudden illness or a death in the family) immediately call the Court Administrator's Office at 334.737.3432.

How Do I Know if I must Report the Next Day?

If you are serving on a jury, you should follow the directions issued by the trial judge. If you have questions about the reporting directions for the next day, ask the bailiff before you leave the Justice Center.

Jurors not seating on a jury hearing a trial must call the Jury Information Line (334.737.3434) each afternoon after 5:00 central time for reporting directions for the next day.

How Will I Know What to Expect During My Jury Service?

The court administrator will provide a brief orientation on the morning you arrive for jury duty.

How Long Will I Be on Jury Duty?

Jurors summoned for jury service for either a one-week or a two-week jury term. Jurors receive a letter prior to the jury term notifying them of the length of service. While most jurors are not at the Justice Center every day of their service, they are "on call" for the duration of the jury term.

Once you have served on a jury panel, you are ineligible under state law to serve again for a period of three years. You may still be eligible for jury service in a federal court.

Most cases are only 1 to 5 days in length. Rarely do we have a case which exceeds 5 days. Should we have a case which the court anticipates lasting more than a week; jurors will be notified prior to selection. If you have a problem serving more than a week you can, at that time, request a postponement from the Judge. Normal hours are Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:30 A.M. - 4:30 P.M. The Court breaks at mid-day for lunch and there are breaks taken in the morning and afternoon.

How are Jurors Selected for a Particular Trial?

Each day jurors report to the Jury Assembly Room and their attendance is taken. When a judge is ready to begin the jury trial, the jurors needed for the case are selected from those persons in attendance for that day. The groups are called and the panel of jurors is escorted to the courtroom.

Once the jury panel reaches the designated courtroom, the jurors are questioned under the supervision of the judge. During this questioning, some jurors may be excused from the case. Once all of the questioning has been completed, each attorney in the case is allowed to remove a certain number of jurors from the panel. The trial jury will consist of the jurors remaining on the panel. Jurors not selected will return to the Jury Assembly room.

Once all of the jury panels have been selected for the day, the remaining jurors, if any, in the Jury Assembly Room will be excused and their service will be completed for that day. If the juror is employed and is released during their typical work hours, the juror is required to return to work or call their supervisor and offer to return to work.

Is It Possible That I Might Report for Jury Duty but Not Actually Sit on a Jury?

It is possible that you may report for jury duty only to be released without going to the courtroom. When this happens, it means the parties have reached a settlement or entered a plea and the case will not be tried. We try to avoid having you come in when not needed, but if there is a last-minute settlement or plea, you may be released without hearing a case. Once a jury panel is sent to the courtroom, it is possible that you will not be selected to hear that specific case. You will then be returned to the jury pool for possible selection in another case.

How Long Will I Be in Court?

It is impossible to predict how long a trial will last. Most trials are completed in one to five days. Rarely do we have a case which exceeds five days. Should we have a case which the court anticipates lasting more than a week; juror will be notified prior to selection. Normal hours are 8:30- 5:00. In most cases, jurors are released by 5 p.m.; however, on occasion, jurors may have to stay beyond that time.

The court will take a break in the trial about every hour or hour and a half. Any juror that needs a break before then should notify the bailiff. You will be given a lunch break but it will not necessarily occur at noon. The judge will break for lunch in between witnesses.

Is There Anything I Can Do to Make My Jury Service More Comfortable?

Yes. While efforts are made to reduce delay and avoid waiting time, you may have to sit for some time before you know whether you have been chosen to actually sit on a jury. You should bring a book, crossword puzzles or any other activity you can do quietly while waiting.

What May Jurors Wear to Jury Service?

Jurors should dress comfortably in clothing that appropriately maintains the dignity, integrity, decorum, and professional atmosphere of the Court and the administration of justice. Pants worn at the waist with no under-garments being displayed; no torn pants/jeans; no clothing/jewelry that promotes drugs, alcohol, violence, or inappropriate wording or pictures will be permitted. And remember – **SHORTS CAN NEVER BE WORN** in the courtroom. Additionally, the hearing/cooling systems in the courtrooms are not predictable; you may want to bring a sweater or jacket.

If you report to jury service wearing inappropriate attire, you will be required to return home to change into more suitable attire or you will be given a new report date and must return on that date.

What About Lunch?

Jurors are given a lunch break each day but it will not necessarily occur at noon. The judge will break for lunch in between witnesses.

I Have Received a Summons for My Child Who is Away Attending College. May I Take Care of This for Them or Do I Have to Mail It to Them?

You must send the summons or a copy of the summons to your child. The student will need to logon to the jury webpage (juror.alacourt.gov) to respond to the summons. If the student is no longer a Lee County resident, they should forward a confirming document of their residency (copy of driver's license or utility bill with name and new address) by mail (Patricia Campbell, Court Administrator, 2311 Gateway Drive, Suite 201, Opelika AL 36801), fax (334.737.3435) or email (trish.campbell@alacourt.gov). Unless the student has changed residency, he/she will be required to serve as a juror during a school break. Being a full or part time students does not constitute grounds for excusal.

I Have Received a Summons for a Person Who Is Now Deceased. What Do I Do to Take Care of This?

Notify Court Administration by phone 334.737.3432) or email (trish.campbell@alacourt.gov).

I Have Received a Summons for a Person who does not live at this address. What do I do with the summons?

The summons needs to be returned indicating that the person does not live at the address. Write "return to sender/person does not live at the address." across the front of the summons and place it in your mailbox. We will notify Voter's Registration Office of the citizen's move.

I Have Received a Summons for a Person Who is Active Duty Military. How do I handle this?

Send a copy of the summons to the service member. The service member must logon to the jury webpage (juror.alacourt.gov) to respond to the summons and then forward a copy of their orders to the Court Administration by fax (334.737.3435) or email (trish.campbell@alacourt.gov).

What If I Don't Have Transportation?

There are no transportation exemptions. If you have not been rescheduled before, then you may request a postponement in order to make better arrangements to appear. You may also contact Lee-Russell Public Transit (formally LETA) for transportation at 334.749.9092 or 877.743.3739. You may also visit their web site (<http://lrcog.com/LRPT.html>) which includes information regarding the Dial-A-Ride system.

Can I Bring My Cell Phone with Me to Jury Duty?

Yes. Jurors that are reporting for the first time or voir dire may have their cell phone with them. When you enter the courtroom, all cell phones must be turned off. However, if you are selected to serve on a jury to hear a case, you cannot have your cell phone with you. You can leave it in your vehicle or with the court bailiff. Should your family have an

emergency you can be reached by calling the Court Administrator's Office at (334) 737-3432. You will be located and your message relayed.

Will There Be Any Type of Security Screening?

Everyone entering the Lee County Justice Center must clear through security. No hats or head coverings, smoking materials, vaping materials, lighters, or any type of weapons, including pocket knives are allowed in the Justice Center. Please leave anything that you think might not be allowed in your vehicle or at home.

Where Should I park for Jury Duty?

Parking is available in the Justice Center parking lot. There is no charge for parking.

Why Can't the Public Volunteer for Jury Service?

The Code of Alabama states "When jurors, grand or petit, are needed for court, the judge, or where there are more than one, then any one of the judges of the court, shall at a time within his or her discretion, but at least 20 days prior to the date on which the prospective jurors are to serve, draw or cause to be provided from the master jury list compiled pursuant to Rule 40, Alabama Rules of Judicial Administration, the names of prospective jurors in a number the judge deems sufficient to obtain the juries needed for the period for which the names are drawn;" While we would like to accept volunteers, it would violate the selection process of this code. In other words, the law does not allow us to accept volunteers.

How Can I Speak to a Real Person?

Monday morning is the busiest time for phone calls and the wait time will be longer. If possible, call in the afternoon. Please remember that many questions and some transactions may be handled on the webpage. The office phone number is 33.737.3432.